

REMARKS

Claims 1-3, 5-15, 17-21, 23-24, 26, 29-30, and 32-33 are pending. Claims 1, 9, 15, 21, 26, and 30 are being amended.

The applicant appreciates the indication that claims 1-3, 5-8, 15, 17-21, 23-24, 26, 29-30, and 32-33 are directed to allowable subject matter. Independent claims 1, 6, 15, 21, 26, and 30 are being amended as suggested by the Examiner to overcome the informalities indicated in the Office Action. Accordingly, claims 1-3, 5-8, 15, 17-21, 23-24, 26, 29-30, and 32-33 are in condition for allowance.

Claims 9-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,891,799 to Tsui in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,990,507 to Mochizuki.

Tsui and Mochizuki do not teach or suggest the invention recited in claims 9-14. Claim 9 is directed to a method that includes forming a second conductive region that directly couples a third conductive plug to a fourth conductive plug that is not aligned with the third conductive plug. An example of this is the conductive layer 40 that connects the plug 37 to the plug 55 in Figure 8 of the present application.

Tsui and Mochizuki do not teach or suggest such a second conductive region. The Examiner admits that Tsui does not show such a second conductive region, but asserts that a first wiring layer 37 of Mochizuki is such a second conductive region. The applicant disagrees because the wiring layer 37 only connects two conductive regions 35, 38 that are directly aligned with one another. Similarly, the plugs of Tsui that are being connected to one another also are directly aligned with one another. In contrast, claim 9 recites that the fourth conductive plug is formed in a fourth opening that is not directly above the third conductive plug and further recites that the fourth conductive plug is not aligned with the third conductive plug. As such, there is no teaching or suggestion in either Tsui or Mochizuki to connect conductive plugs that are not aligned with one another. Accordingly, claims 9-14 are nonobvious in view of Tsui and Mochizuki.

The Director is authorized to charge any additional fees due by way of this Amendment, or credit any overpayment, to our Deposit Account No. 19-1090.

Application No. 10/001,625
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All of the claims remaining in the application are now clearly allowable.
Favorable consideration and a Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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